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Development of a communication system for capitalizing cultural diversity

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Abstract

The paper „Development of a communication system for capitalizing cultural diversity” centers on concrete, practical dimension, on the coordinates of development of an efficient communication system necessary to affirm the cultural diversity within the educational space, which intensifies the generation of a capital value of Romanian society. Development of an educational communication system must be related to the dynamic changes that characterize the educational reality of Romania and allow ensuring respect for cultural differences, recognizing them in the new dimensions of assertion of cultural pluralism. Historical Maramures is the context chosen for the foundation of a good cultural/ethnic experience streamlined at social level, which led to the variance of manifestations by redefining the meanings of "local" in the affirmation of cultural diversity at the level of educational space. Through an efficient communication system, appropriate to this context, intercultural education exceeded the state of manifestation of intercultural relations under the influence of ethnocentrism and develops under the auspices of trans-cultural values in a common supra-cultural space.

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1. Problem Statement

Post-modern Romanian society has built a new way of life, which was released from unwarranted fears, where now the concept of "cultural diversity" represents for a citizen a social fact of living, educating and training in the new multicultural or pluralistic environments.

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From this perspective, the approach of "cultural diversity" in terms of discursive, normative and action builds as a specificity and on the basis of communication strategies developed at the level of educational institutions, but also at the level of communication system built among the local community, where are being developed many interactions or educational situations that require inclusive school environments.

Designing some pluralistic treatment strategies at the level of communities requires also the construction of a connection system between the community and school institution based on the "ability to communicate and the ability to benefit from the effects of this process... extremely important competences in a world of communication" (Stan, C., 2010, pp. 19)

2. Purpose of Study

Renewal and reform educational policies based on valuing the transnational values and existing practices at the international level have regulated the legal framework that allowed a foundation of researches on the issue of education for cultural diversity and the acquisition by the educational beneficiaries of intercultural communication skill.

The motivation for this research proposal is based on respect for cultural differences, promoting values, attitudes and behaviors that support cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism, the intercultural training of trainers, on acquiring intercultural attribute, based on positive experiences, which are responsible for reform and renewal processes of the social and educational life in Romania.

Historical Maramures is the context opted for the analysis of reality of "cultural diversity", of the model of intercultural communication as the foundation of a good ethnic and cultural experience, efficient at the political, social and educational level which set deeply changes, both as benefits and as social difficulties, but also the meanings of "local" influences in affirming the cultural diversity in the educational reality under equal opportunities.

3. Research Methods

Romanian education system is under the influence of directions of action of government policies and strategies of civil society that build cultural diversity policy specific to local context. Supporting cultural multiculturalism values, of ethnic diversity, cultural rights, and linguistic diversity involves at macro and community levels a holistic approach at the level of political, social and educational dimensions based on a well-structured legal framework. Developing a communication system based on communication models represents a new model of approach and awareness of how interrelating, which becomes an appropriate and an effective tool at community level to predict the communication behavior of the members, but also constitutes a step in the prevention of barriers and blockages in communication.

Communication behavior of individuals leads to the identification of "the system of attitudes, principles, values and normative expectations that condition behavior patterns characteristic to the individual" (Chaney, D., 2001, quoted by Cuc, C., 2012, pp.92) and at the level of group builds a structure more or less solid in terms of the system and the coherence of decision. Valuing cultural diversity is no longer limited to a particular phenomenon of Romanian society, but refers to the interactive dimension of social and educational level through which are being discussed system issues, developed common projects, are being built identities together at the level of majority and minority in a framework based on an adequate communication system efficient for the complex phenomenon, encouraging realization of equal opportunities for all, based on mutual respect, cooperation and tolerance necessary affirmation of cultural diverse potential. In this dimension of the dynamics of the social economy develops, historical Maramures, with positive influences at the level of relations between theory and practice or discursive applicative.

This investigative approach was an action model exercise within intercultural education approach that considers diversity as a source of learning for learners, but also for teachers, where through creativity in the educational process are adopted optimal teaching strategies in constructing a model of intercultural communication competence required by "socio-cultural reality and training needs of scholar audience" (Butnar, S., 2009, pp. 579). The aim of the research was to analyze the benchmarks that target acquisition of resources necessary for intercultural communication competence by exploiting these resources in formal and non-formal framework because of the existing interrelations at the educational level between the diversity and continuing education.

Research objectives:

1. Radiography of the existing state of things at the level of educational measures to promote cultural diversity.
2. Identifying training needs of teachers in the intercultural field to acquire intercultural communication competence.
3. Highlighting the possible solutions advanced by the teachers to problematic situations of intercultural interaction.

The investigative demarche was focused on the training needs of teachers in pre-university education, in terms of acquiring the intercultural communication competence necessary in the efficient management of intercultural relations in a social and educational reality, sometimes with a dialogue difficult to manage on the basis of different ethnic and cultural experiences and of a local curriculum that can help learners to understand the permanent existence in the community of the conflicts arising between social ideals and realities.

General hypothesis:

Acquiring resources necessary to intercultural communication competence and practicing mobilization of these resources determine the response to cultural diversity.

For the investigative demarche was required to carry out a sampling operation of the target population in the research conducted rigorously as possible. Investigated group consisted of 80 subjects, based on simple random sampling procedures, teachers from pre-university education: teachers from the preschool level (20 subjects), primary level (25 subjects), gymnasium (20 subjects), high school (15), direct actors of educational action.

We mention, these teachers were from five institutions and structures related to them with an ethnic and cultural diversity of the school population, with a teaching activity centered on forming the intercultural communication competence and an efficient system of management of intercultural relations. To describe the lot of research were taken into account: initial and continuous training, age recorded in the education system and also in the specialty recorded in the system, the number of years since they work in the institution, teaching degree, pedagogical training programs followed. In line with the objectives have been established working methods and tools that ensure sustainability of observant research in the context of the limited time available for the subjects to respond to the questionnaire.

As a complementary method was used the semi-standardized and non-standardized interview technique, based on which was aimed to obtain from teachers different impressions, reactions, opinions and suggestions in accordance with the issue debated.

It was performed also a preliminary interviewing of the subjects of experimental group for the elaboration of some questionnaires relevant to the research, that targeted specific issues noticed by these in educational reality.

In experimental research were taken into account also research tools and methods used in data collection, analysis of which verifies the hypothesis and provides pertinent answers on the topic investigated, and the method of research documents and other school documents, aiming to measure the results from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

4. Findings and Results

By reporting the information obtained from respondents have been outlined the study results, on which basis were structured research findings. The aim outlined in the intervention was reached, outlining the quantitative and qualitative patterns resulting from the projected educational activity that offer students the necessary opportunities to develop intercultural communication system, where they will be able to integrate cultural differences in their own identity, building through this report a multicultural identity.

The research objectives were correlated with the general hypothesis, which was confirmed, ensuring consistency and validity of the undertaken study. In this study was found an increased availability of respondents to respond positively to situations that admit communication with "the other, and others," by projecting educational demarches that aimed capitalization of socio-cultural reality and training needs of educational beneficiaries.

A percentage of 78% of respondents claimed to be concerned about the exploitation of cultural diversity through a better communication at the community level, but also at government level through the involvement of

members of cultural communities (Ukrainian, Hungarian, gypsy) while a percentage of 70% of respondents supported the need for exercising a "cultural responsiveness" by adhering to cross-cultural values and spiritual supra-cultural common space.

Also, 52% of teachers showed that postmodern society is marked by changes of social economy and intercultural transient that require a rethinking of training strategy for intercultural, of models of integration in the educational space by training the educational binominal from observing and living concrete situations to solving real problems. The same percentage also highlights the potential triggers factors of intercultural communication blockages, including characteristics of socio-cultural context, individualistic or subjective attitudes, characteristics of individual-group relations and endemic fears.

The answers given by the respondents in the survey based on a written questionnaire and interview-based survey provided data and information about communication climate affected by the existing barriers / blockages in didactic communication that promotes cultural diversity: a percentage of 48% promotes the type of integrative training, but claiming that in educational demarche they feel the particularities of socio-cultural context of students, highlighted by the conflict of values, beliefs, convictions, intercultural differences, differences in status, the existence of prejudice, the tendency of labeling that print cultural and socio-economic disadvantaged groups different development paths to members of majority groups such causing perceptual-attitudinal blockages in the intercultural communication; 74% of respondents project in teaching activity action playful stimulation demarches that lead to the reduction of the frequency of aggressive behaviors, with the role of preventing the apparition and progression of aggressive behavior (by developing self-control will not pass from verbal to physical aggression).

Also these activities have an impact even on emotions caused by self-distrust and low self-esteem, leading to reducing fears of being minority and stand out through personal sensibilities by reflecting cultural / ethnic experiences, as a form of potential emotional blockage; 64% of teachers are concerned about the development of intercultural communication skills, socio-relational blockages encountered in the learners, manifested by some students by isolation, refusal to cooperate and communicate with the group due to cultural differences or socio-economic disadvantages, and by an addiction to cultural group as a proof of loyalty to it, which leads to reduction of efficient interethnic and intercultural interpersonal interactions; and 75% of respondents supported the need to reduce linguistic barriers that are associated with speech difficulties with incorrect information and sometimes with the absence of communication skills.

The solution advanced by teachers is projecting a multicultural curriculum that would provide students the opportunity to form competencies necessary to cultural interrelating, to participate to aesthetic experiences of cultural groups, to understand the existence of conflict between ideals and reality of postmodern society, but also the assertion of a "culture of intercultural" as socio-political and economic construction based on the values, historical experiences and relational dynamism in this space of cultural pluralism.

A percentage of 67% of teachers claimed that a possible solution would be developing intercultural sensitivity in educational environment based on the transition from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, which leads to decrease of difficulties and disagreements between members of different cultures in intercultural communication, and "curriculum allows students to study cultures, historical and social experiences of cultural/ethnic groups, so that students with this information can, intentionally change the reference "(Bennett, M., 1993 cited by Butnar, S., 2009, pp .582) and change their attitude and behavior depending on the norms and principles of cultural groups that interrelate.

A percentage of 86% of respondents have advanced the solution the need to develop multicultural educational institutions where policies and school procedures would favor a communication system and positive interrelation based on a comprehensive curriculum that provides a holistic perspective of the cultural groups. The same respondents advanced as solution for educational approach the development of intercultural competence having as reference the identity as a result of changes, negotiations of meaning or cultural transactions existing in postmodern society dominated by highly mobile transnational capital, global market forces, so strong, that determined the intercultural space to become more extensive through migrations of information and communication performance.

From the responses of 86% of respondents it was confirmed that through continuing education programs, in accordance with international standards, they would develop their cultural style involved in teaching, acquiring resources necessary to intercultural communication competence and to mobilization of them in identifying solutions to problematic situations of intercultural communication. Through interview-based survey we appreciate that information obtained were a real support for improvement of continuous training of teachers in order to promote cultural diversity in a society dominated by globalism, where teachers develop at students also global competence,

teaching them where, when and what identity should use depending on the dominant socio-cultural or socio-economic context.

It was found that the elaboration of counseling programs, and of continuous training programs in education for diversity is still a deficient form, as there is no a coherent, unified, flexible offer and also a small number of specialists in the field, to promote multidimensional models of intercultural. Lack of financial resources for conferences, workshops in the field of education for cultural diversity and subfield of communication in the country or abroad, participation fees for specialized courses difficult to honor from these beneficiaries, all these significantly influence educational approach.

The responses provided by respondents aimed their desire to participate in professional training programs, which target models and theories centered on practical applicative dimension, the structural dimension of intercultural competence resources, developing skills, abilities needed for the efficient management of intercultural relationships. A way indicated is the exchange of experience at the level of teachers involved in the complex mechanism of managing intercultural relations aiming to know the position in interaction, tolerance, interaction management, empathy, orientation to knowledge or behavior in accomplishing a task.

Another issue discussed was highlighting the other methods of continuous training of teachers in this area by combining harmoniously interactive techniques with experimental practices in this field, but also practicing their creative capacity in methodological plan. All these advanced solutions are a relevant aspect in training, but also to identify the best strategies for intervention in the formation of intercultural communication competence.

5. Conclusions

Diagnostic study obtained permitted efficiency to intercultural communication through direct and immediate access to the forms of culture and civilization, due to education of selectivity and competence in what follows the information transmitted. Developing intercultural communication competence led to engaging students in cooperative activities, to emphasize the degree of interaction and to broaden the framework of the activities undertaken beyond school institution, representing elements that can stimulate intellectual activity of students and develop intercultural dialogue.

School needs changes, which would reflect the cultural diversity of society, the development of mechanisms to signal possibility of the manifestation of rigid cultural attitudes or of exclusion of disadvantaged socio-economic groups. But changing conditions are influenced by the design mode of the favorable conditions of the initiative of actors, by the complex character of intercultural learning, to encourage introspection practice of teachers to identify any individual and cultural differences.

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